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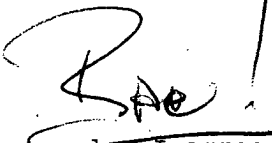
OIT-0974/88
14 OCT 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Administration

FROM: Edward J. Maloney
                 Director of Information Technology

SUBJECT: Topics for Bimonthly Discussions

REFERENCE: Your Memo (DDA 88-1957),dtd 19 Sep 88, Same Subject

1.   I agree that the August 1987 IG Report on the Office of Information Technology provides a useful reference point for our continuing discussions. Although the report covered only OIT's computer and communications operations (reserving for the future a review of our system development, architectural, engineering, and management services), it did include a number of important observations that can be generalized to the whole office.

2.   For our discussions, I suggest that we group the seven issues you have listed into three general categories. These categories are outlined below, followed by some initial thoughts about our progress and direction in each area.

     a. Facing the Future:

         (1) OIT Goals and Priorities: how they are set and communicated.

         (2) The Integration of communications and ADP personnel within OIT.

         (3) Training: technical, operational, and career development training.

     b. Streamlining Operations:

         (1) Communication between components within OIT: team building efforts undertaken and the visibility and roles of OIT senior managers.

         (2) Bureaucracy: the charges of overcentralized decisionmaking, excessive paperwork and the lack of standardized procedures.

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c. Serving Customers:

(1) Communications between OIT and other Agency components.

(2) Customer Service: OIT success with the reorganization and the handling of routine versus ad hoc requirements.

3. Facing the Future.

a. It has become a truism that technological advances are accelerating the rate of change. Those who work with information technologies may experience a sense of helplessness in the face of the constant changes that seem to make today's efforts obsolete even before they are put into effect. To overcome these effects and maintain full productivity, employees at all levels need to feel competent and to have a sense of perspective and direction.

b. To address this challenge, we have been building from the ground up by improving our career development and training programs. We have established a new Occupational Panel career management system that enables us to evaluate employees more equitably with their peers and to develop training and development profiles addressing the specific needs of each OIT speciality. At the same time, we have been intermixing employees from all fields in orientation and managerial training sessions so they can share experiences and gain a sense of common mission. In addition, we have enhanced our operational training program to provide more up-to-date technical training. These enhancements include establishing a full time training staff and acquiring hardware and software for computer-based training.

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c. We also are making progress in setting and communicating Office goals and priorities. For example, the move of the ⬚ Center to the New Headquarters Building was successful in large part because it was made known clearly to employees through all levels of management that this was our highest priority. Our present emphasis on improving existing services rather than moving on to new ones too quickly also seems to be improving our effectiveness. In addition, our current drive to increase the availability of services is being emphasized whenever our managers get together in formal or informal settings.

d. Progress outside our Office seems to be moving somewhat slowly. We appreciate initiatives such as those taken by the Information Systems Board to develop an Agency information policy, as well as the cooperation we have received in forums such as the Customer/Standards Committee. However, we still are left with the feeling that the Agency is unsure of the role it wishes its central information services to fill. I believe this provides an opportunity for us to work together to establish a framework in which OIT employees can function most productively.

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4. Streamlining Operations.

a. To improve communication among OIT components, we have developed and distributed several informational guides to help our employees understand our organization and the functions we each perform. These publications include an organizational directory and service guide, an employee handbook, and a newsletter covering topics of general interest to Office employees. To further emphasize team building, we have published a special report illustrating the successful teamwork involved in relocating the [   ] Computer Center to the New Headquarters Building.

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b. One of the more significant steps we have taken recently to improve the focus of responsibilities within OIT has been to establish a Requirements and Plans Staff in the front office. This new staff will handle high-level requirements that are received or generated within the Office. As a first step, it is actively engaged in discussions with the Group Chiefs to delineate responsibilities and develop workable coordination procedures. Within the next several months, we hope to standardize these procedures and publish a clearer breakdown of responsibilities to the rest of the Agency. At the same time, we plan to work from these higher-level arrangements to establish more standard procedures within the groups.

c. We also have drawn together three information security-related components into a single Technical Security Division within the Management Services Group. This should improve information security coordination by having one officer with overall responsibility for computer security, communications security, and security policy. In addition, as indicated below, we have made several other organizational improvements to focus our efforts more clearly on customer service.

5. Serving Customers.

a. In keeping with one of the IG Report's major points, we have kept organizational changes to a minimum consistent with the dynamics of the information technology business. Since the reorganization mentioned in the Report, we have focused on improving our existing structure to support our customers more effectively.

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b. For example, in order to place all network responsibilities under a single manager, we have merged [   ] the Communications Engineering Division with the Customer Service Group to form the new Network Services Group. Among the service-related improvements within this group, maintenance calls now will be tracked by the individuals receiving them, no matter who else may need to be involved; moreover, the longer a trouble call remains unresolved, the higher the level of management that will be notified.

c. To further improve our communication with customers, we have identified points of contact to handle inquiries about projects supported by OIT personnel under the auspices of other DA offices. In addition, we have established single points of contact to ensure that

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relocations involving the Original Headquarters Building, the New Headquarters Building, and the [   ] receive the needed priority and coordinated effort for both voice and data services.

    d. In the wider framework of customer communication, we are automating our processing of the form used to request voice and data services. This will help our customers ensure that their requests are filled out properly, to track them through their component and directorate to OIT, and to receive acknowledgment of receipt by OIT along with a project number for future reference. We also hope to incorporate in Agency regulations a single point of contact for coordination of ADP procurement requests.

    6. I look forward to discussing these topics with you over the coming months. I plan to include, when appropriate, those senior OIT managers who can benefit from or make a special contribution to individual discussions. I know we will gain from this opportunity to work with you as a team to tackle the management challenges that will continue to confront us.

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Edward J. Maloney

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DDA 88-1957
19 September 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Information Technology

FROM: R. M. Huffstutler
                   Deputy Director for Administration

SUBJECT: Topics for Bi-monthly Discussions

1. I have just read the August 1987 IG Report on the Office of
Information Technology. I find that many of the points raised by the
inspection team concern issues that you and I have discussed in the past.
Moreover, there are issues that you have taken steps to address. I think it
would be a useful exercise for us to review. OIT's progress in a number of
these areas as a point of departure for some of our future discussions. It
may also be useful to have your senior managers attend these discussions in
view of what they could contribute and what they might learn. The issues that
I see as being of primary interest are the following:

   ° The integration of communications and ADP personnel within OIT.

   ° Bureaucracy: the charges of overcentralized decisionmaking,
      excessive paperwork and the lack of standardized procedures.

   ° Customer Service: your success with the reorganization and the
      handling of routine versus ad hoc requirements.

   ° Training: technical, operational, and career development training.

   ° Communications between Components within OIT: team building efforts
      you have undertaken and the visibility and roles of your senior
      managers.

   ° Communications between OIT and other Agency components.

   ° OIT Goals and Priorities: how they are set and communicated.

2. Please feel free to group these questions any way that you find
convenient and comfortable. It seems to me there is enough material to
require at least several discussions in the course of the coming months.
Neither you nor your managers should regard this as an instruction to carry
out the details of the inspection report especially if you feel that the
findings of the inspection team are unwarranted. These general observations
do accord well, however, with those that we have discussed and I think they
provide a useful guideline for exploring issues in the office.

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R. M. Huffstutler

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SUBJECT: Topics for Bimonthly Discussion

STAT   MSD/MSG/OIT[   ] (7 Oct 88)

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